Indian and Northern Affairs Canada | Affaires indiennes et du Nord Canada

Fall 2005

NWT Plain Talk

On Land and Self-government

After a week long canoe voyage, Tłı̨chǫ Citizens from Wekweti, Gameti and Wha Ti arrived at the community of Behchokǫ̀ on August 2nd, 2005 and participated in the four-day celebration of the New Tlicho Government.

Recognition Day for the New Tłı̨chǫ Government

August 4th, 2005 marked the beginning of the new Tłı̨chǫ Government, and the conclusions of business of the Dogrib Treaty 11 Council which had led the Tłı̨chǫ people through the negotiations over the past 14 years.

To honour and celebrate the Tłı̨chǫ Government effective date, more than 50 canoes travelled from Wha Ti, Gameti and Wekweti to the community of Behchokǫ̀ (formerly Rae-Edzo). As the Tłı̨chǫ paddlers pulled up on the shores of Marian Lake after a week-long voyage, they were greeted by a cheering crowd and the traditional firing of rifles toward the sky. Festivities began immediately with musicians performing and a few friendly competitions of log-sawing, wood cutting, and tea-boiling.

Chief Charlie Jim Nitsiza of Wha Ti and NWT Commissioner, Tony Whitford, at the August 4th Tlicho ceremonies.

On the evening of August 3, there was a feast and drum dance leading up to the highly anticipated countdown to midnight. As the clock struck twelve and the calender flipped to August 4th - the official start of the Tłı̨chǫ Government - fireworks exploded into the warm night sky over the heads of hundreds of revellers. It was a time for

Behchokǫ̀ youth, Kat Martin, waves her flag with pride and excitement.

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The purpose of our newsletter is to keep you informed on the progress of land and self-government negotiations in the Northwest Territories, and to provide some answers to frequently asked questions. We also feature the people and communities involved in negotiations, celebrate milestones, and announce upcoming events. On behalf of the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (DIAND), we hope you will find our newsletter informative and easy to read.

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Tłı̨chǫ Elders pose for the historical moment. Standing: Eddie Erasmus and Joe Rabesca. Sitting: Michel Louis Rabesca and Edward Weyallon.

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celebration of past work and reflection on the opportunity ahead.

The Tłı̨chǫ Community Government Members were sworn-in on the morning of August 4th, followed by an opening prayer and remarks, and the official closing of the Dogrib Treaty 11 Council 14th Annual Gathering.

Ceremonies continued in the afternoon with the swearing-in of the Tłı̨chǫ Assembly Members by Father Pochat. Then the Assembly passed the first Tłı̨chǫ laws (Tłı̨chǫ Omnibus Implementation Law and Tłı̨chǫ Income Tax Law), approved the Tłı̨chǫ Government Starter Budget, and heard a statement by Grand Chief Joe Rabesca and remarks by Tłı̨chǫ Assembly Members.

Tłı̨chǫ Citizens, guests and well wishers continued outside to watch with excitement as the new Tłı̨chǫ flag was hoisted into the air. Among the honoured guests were: Minister of State for Northern Affairs- Ethel Blondin-Andrew, President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Lucienne Robillard, and Parliamentary Secretary, Sue Barnes.

James WahShee, former negotiator and designer of the flag, explained the symbols of the flag to the crowd. The royal blue represents the sub-Arctic territory of the Tłı̨chǫ; the four tepees represent the Tłı̨chǫ communities, the North Star represents direction and a new era for the Tłı̨chǫ people; and the sun and river represent the words of Chief Monfwi who signed Treaty 11 in 1921.

Tłı̨chǫ voters went to the polls on September 1st and elected the Tłı̨chǫ government's first Grand Chief, George Mackenzie.

Elder Mary Adele Beaverho of Wha Ti

Therese Mantla holds the microphone for the Tłı̨chǫ youth from Behchokǫ̀ s Elizabeth Mackenzie Elementary School.

Rosa Fish cooks caribou for the celebration feast

What Happens Now?

Tłı̨chǫ Agreement in Effect

As of August 4, 2005, the Tłı̨chǫ have the powers and resources to govern themselves, strengthen their economy, and to protect culture, language, heritage, lands and resources. The Tłı̨chǫ Agreement will encourage economic investment and partnerships in their territory, and pave the way for new jobs and educational opportunities.

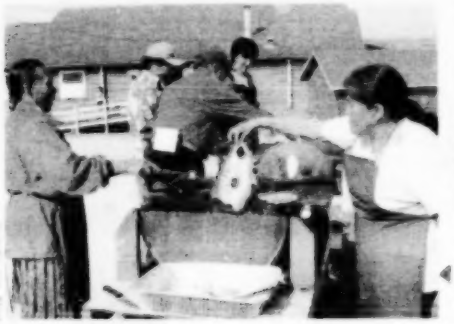
The new Tłı̨chǫ Government will be able to make decisions that directly affect to the well being of Tłı̨chǫ communities and culture, and allow the Tłı̨chǫ to design and manage programs, along with agreements with the territorial and federal governments, that respect and promote the Tłı̨chǫ way of life. The Agreement also guarantees Tłı̨chǫ representation in new Tłı̨chǫ community public governments to ensure their interests and culture are reflected over time and as the population mix changes.

For the next ten years, programs and services in the Tłı̨chǫ communities will be a joint effort between the Tłı̨chǫ, the GNWT and the Government of Canada. An Intergovernmental Services Agreement among the Tłı̨chǫ, the GNWT and the Government of Canada has been put in place so that the administration and delivery of key programs and services such as health care, education and other social programs and services in each of the four Tłı̨chǫ communities will be a team effort. These programs and services will be delivered in a way that respects Tłı̨chǫ heritage and culture, as well as the interests of residents who are not Tłı̨chǫ citizens.

Wha Ti Tłı̨chǫ Citizens. From left to right: Jimmy Rabesca, George Nitsiza, Mike Nitsiza, Alphonz Nitsiza, Albert Nitsiza, Michel Mooseriose, Alfred Beaverho and Phillip Rabesca (translator from Behchokǫ̀ and NWT Commissioner, Tony Whitford.

The royal blue represents the sub-Arctic territory of the Tłı̨chǫ, the four tepees represent the Tłı̨chǫ communities, the North Star represents direction and a new era for the Tłı̨chǫ people, and the sun and river represent the words of Chief Monfwi who signed Treaty 11 in 1921.

Elizabeth MacKenzie speaks before the raising of the flag ceremony.



Two Elders, Marie and Alphonse Outtle of Gameti, enjoy the ceremonies.

The feast included caribou and fish, cooked by Rosa Fish, Mary Adele Mantla, and Lena Drybones. Helping themselves to fish are Louis Flunkie and Norman Mackenzie.

New Direction for Beaufort-Delta Community Consultation

The Gwich'in Tribal Council and the Inuvialuit Regional Corporation have recently reexamined their work and resources, and have decided to focus more of their self-government negotiation time and money towards the communities. Both organizations agree that the negotiations and day-to-day work need to happen in the communities at the "grass roots" level, and the extra costs of a main office in Inuvik are not necessary. As a result, the Beaufort-Delta Self-government Office in Inuvik closed at the end of August.

As of September 1, 2005, the Gwich'in and Inuvialuit self-government teams will be working out the Gwich'in Tribal Council Office and the Inuvialuit Regional Corporation Office. This will focus self-government negotiations into the communities, particularly to focus on developing constitutions that will define and shape the future governments.

Tłı̨chǫ Wek'èezhìi Boards in Operation

As land claims and self-government negotiations with Aboriginal people are finalized in the remaining regions of the NWT, additional boards are created. For example, on August 4th the Tłı̨chǫ Agreement came into effect and the Wek'èezhìi Land and Water Board and Wek'èezhìi Renewable Resource Board were created as a result of the Agreement.

What does the Wekeezhii Land and Water Board do?

Although the Wek'èezhìi Land and Water Board is established, it will not have the authority to review applications until February 4, 2006. This six months allows the newly appointed Board members time to begin establishing policies, hiring staff and setting up office operations. After February 4, 2006 the Board will regulate land and water use in an area in the North Slave called Wek'èezhìi.This board is similar to the boards that were established in the Gwich'in and Sahtu areas.The Wek'èezhìi Land and Water Board makes up one portion of the Mackenzie Valley Land and Water Board. As a whole, the Mackenzie Valley Land and Water Board issues water licences and land use permits in all the different regions of the Mackenzie Valley.

What dos the Wekeezhii Renewable Resource Board do?

The Wek'èezhìi Renewable Resources Board supervises the management of wildlife and habitat in the Wek'èezhìi area.The Board makes recommendations about wildlife, forest and plant resources, as well as commercial harvesting activities.

Both Boards are currently in the process of appointing board members and then will begin making decisions about hiring staff, office operations and office location.

What does "Wek'èezhìi " mean?

When Tłı̨chǫ Chief Monfwi signed Treaty 11 at Behchokǫ̀ (formerly Rae-Edzo) on August 22, 1921, he described the traditional area of the Tłı̨chǫ First Nation as "Mohwi Gogha De Nàtlee." Over the years, the Tłı̨chǫ continue to use this traditional area, however, a new portion of land inside the Mohwi Gogha De Nàtlee has been identified and is called ". Wek'èezhìi" "Wek'èezhìi", means "within the area." Wek'èezhìi is the management area over which the Wekeezhii Renewable Resources Board and the Wek'èezhìi Land and Water Board have authority.

Wek'èezhìi is bounded on the northeast by Nunavut; on the northwest by the Sahtu settlement area; on the southwest by a line agreed to between the Tłı̨chǫ and the Deh Cho in an overlap agreement; and on the southeast by a line agreed between the Tłı̨chǫ and the Akaitcho Dene in an overlap agreement.

Presenting to Youth on Tomorrow's Self Government

by Senwung Luk

Every Canadian knows that Canada is the second biggest country in the world...however, very few southern Canadians ever get to experience how big the country really is - they never get to see the full majesty of a northern sunset or the comforting quiet of a walk in the Arctic snow. This past winter, fortune smiled on two law students from Toronto's Osgoode Hall Law School of York University (myself and Maggie Farrington) as we were allowed to travel to one of the most unique places in Canada - the Beaufort-Delta.

As part of an Intensive Program in Aboriginal Law, two law students came up to Inuvik to work with the Gwich'in Tribal Council and the Beaufort-Delta Self-government Office for seven weeks. As part of our work for the Gwich'in Tribal Council, we presented on self-government to schools in Fort McPherson, Tsiigehtchic, Inuvik and Aklavik. We focused on the idea that the youth of today would become the owners of tomorrow's self-government. We went through several interactive exercises with the students to explore the idea of making decisions as a community: what does it mean to have authority to govern? And what's the best way of using that authority? What's the best way to make a decision together?

After a presentation on self-government, students from Fort McPherson's Chief Julius School pose with one of the self-government presenters, Tara Greenland. Shayla Snowshoe, Maggie Farrington (law student/presenter), and Charmaine Wilson.

We were very grateful for the warm welcome we received in the schools. We were very lucky to get a chance to experience the singular grandeur of the North, and more than that, to be present at the re-birth of self-government for the Gwich'in and the Inuvialuit was a truly priceless experience. We hope that we made a positive contribution, however small, to helping Northerners and Aboriginal people reshape their communities.

You were asking...

What is "Community Consultation"?

As part of the self-government negotiations, Northern communities are involved in a "consultation" process that keeps them updated on what self-government means to them and their community. All three parties negotiating the self-government agreement are involved in the consultation - the federal government (DIAND), the territorial government (GNWT), and the Aboriginal group - and it gives community members a chance to ask numerous questions in a one-on-one setting.

Consultations can be done in many forms: in-house visits from the communities' local self-government field officer, community presentations or meetings, radio call-in shows, or even a coffee or tea at the nearby cafe.

Do you have a question about land or self-government negotiations in the NWT? We'd be happy to provide an answer. Contact us at the address listed below.

On the Web

Government of Canada programs and services
Government of Canada site:
www.gc.ca

DIAND
Northwest Territories Region site:
www.nwt-tno.inac-ainc.gc.ca

Youthbuzz on the NWT:
www.nwt-tno.inac-ainc.gc.ca/Youthbuzz

Agreements
Indian and Northern Affairs Canada site:
www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/pr/agr/index_e.html

Plain Talk *on the web*
Indian and Northern Affairs Canada site:
www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/nt/pt/index_e.html

OUR VISION

The NWT region of DIAND is a respected partner in a strong and healthy Northwest Territories.

We strive for:

- respectful, effective relationships with Aboriginal people;
- creating and enhancing opportunities for all Northerners;
- responsible resource development in healthy ecosystems;
- northern control over northern resources;
- responsive and accountable northern government as partners; and
- national initiatives that reflect the interests of all Northerners.

Got something to say to us?

Here's who to contact:

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